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Teaching and Learning Philosophy

I believe, much like Robert Frost, that “I am not a teacher, but an awakener.” As an educator, I provoke thought, incite critical thinking, and promote learning. I believe in removing barriers by creating an equitable, inclusive, diverse, and accessible learning environment for all students. I believe in creating a safe space for students to learn and make mistakes. I believe in meeting students where they are and elevating them to where they need to be without lowering the expectations. Teaching is about giving others permission to discover and propagate their innate right to learn. I am a teacher to my students, my direct reports, and to my peers.

For me, teaching is an evolving process that requires time, self-reflection, understanding, and analysis. The goal is to never stop being a better educator than the day before, and the best way to achieve this goal is to constantly learn from others. Teaching and learning are co-mingled processes. To be an effective educator, I must continue to evolve and learn.

Learning, for me, occurs in a variety of ways:

- Pursuing avenues of professional development
- Networking with colleagues through conferences and learning communities
- Following higher education news and trends
- Delving into the literature on teaching and learning
- Making myself readily available to build relationships with students
- Being a student myself

As a current graduate student, I find my role as a learner enables me to think about course structure, content organization, and course outcomes from a different perspective. Being a current student gives me access to new forms of content presentation as well as how other instructors establish their courses for student success. By virtue of being a student, I can relate to students. I can more easily explain how I, too, suffer from test anxiety. I tell them that how I study and manage my time. I understand first-hand the struggles of being a working student because I am one of them.

At the end of the term, my goal is to be able to teach my students how to be successful inside and outside the class. I do this by connecting content to real-life. While I enjoy learning about a variety of subject areas; as an educator I teach developmental math and history courses. In both disciplines I cover the required learning outcomes while incorporating both soft skills and life skills that carry over long after the course. For history, I frame research and writing assignments in a way that provides real-world context, such as resume writing or a teaching presentation. In the math courses I work to develop a student’s mathematical foundation by connecting the course content with real-world application, such as financial literacy. Through the bolstering of real-world skills, I provide students course content while allowing them to develop proficiencies that can impact their economic mobility and their career development.

Whether I am teaching math or history I always strive to improve my courses and prioritize student success. In order to promote student success, I build and teach accessible courses that allow me the flexibility to meet students’ needs. In the case of Covid-19, I quickly switched my courses to a remote learning format with integrated student technology resources. Moving to a fully online structure enabled me to explore new teaching styles and strategies. I transitioned from a face-to-face collaborative group learning approach to a technology based flipped classroom with synchronous and asynchronous components to maximize student

engagement. As someone who takes online graduate-level math courses, I understand the struggle of presenting math in an online format. I was able to emulate some of the techniques I have seen in my online coursework to better help my students.

Ultimately, my mission as an educator is simple. I want to grow students by providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in their next course and in their life. Education circumvents the walls of our class space and time together. Teaching and learning is not about being in the classroom every day; it's about sharing knowledge, empowering others, and growing together. As William Arthur Ward said: "Teaching is more than imparting knowledge; it is inspiring change. Learning is more than absorbing facts; it is acquiring understanding." Each individual has the capability to teach and learn regardless of their experiences. The question is, how can I help students conquer possibility?